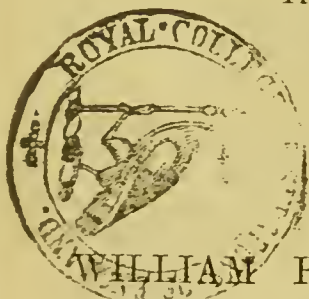


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ON THE ABOLITION OF
PRIVATE SLAUGHTER-HOUSES
IN TOWNS,

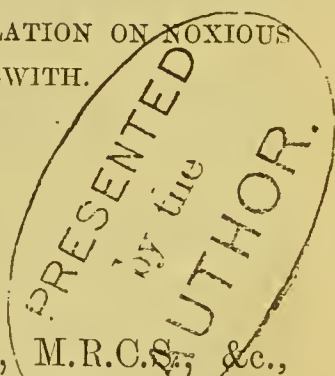
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LEGISLATION ON NOXIOUS
TRADES CONNECTED THEREWITH.



BY

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*A Paper Read at a Meeting of the Health Department of the
Social Science Association, on Monday, March 30th, 1874.*

F. S. POWELL, Esq., in the chair.

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ON THE ABOLITION OF
PRIVATE SLAUGHTER-HOUSES IN TOWNS,
AND ON
FUTURE LEGISLATION FOR NOXIOUS TRADES.

THE present time is one peculiarly propitious for inviting discussion upon slaughter-house reform in the metropolis, and for urging upon Parliament the consideration of legislative measures affecting the slaughtering of cattle, as well as of several other noxious trades in close relation to the same. It is one of those departments of public health legislation in which the interests of many private persons are, more or less, affected on the one hand, and the health of people congregated in cities on the other. It would be a waste of time to enter minutely into all the legislative Acts bearing upon the regulation of offensive or noxious trades, for I may assume that most persons who are here present and disposed to take part in the discussion this evening are already informed upon the subject. The Metropolis Building Act of 1844, as far as the metropolis is concerned, has been very generally understood by the metropolitan vestries and the butchers themselves, to virtually abolish a greater part of the private slaughter-houses of the metropolis after the 9th of August this year, that is, thirty years after the passing of the Act. Although there may be some legal quibble as to the interpretation of clause 55, it enacts it will become illegal to erect or carry on any of the offensive or obnoxious trades specified in the Act in premises that are not beyond fifty feet of any first-class dwelling-house or forty feet from any open way.

The following is the clause:—

“I.V.—For the purpose of making provision concerning businesses, offensive or noxious, be it enacted, with regard to the following businesses, that is to say, blood-boiler, bone-boiler, fellmonger, slaughterer of cattle, sheep, or horses, soap-boiler, tallow-melter, tripe-boiler, and any other like business offensive or noxious, so far as relates to the erection of buildings

in the neighbourhood of any such business, and so far as relates to the carrying on of any such business in the neighbourhood of any public way or of other buildings of the first or dwelling-house class. That it shall not be lawful hereafter to erect any buildings of the first or dwelling-house class nearer to than fifty feet from any building which shall be in use for any such offensive or noxious business; but if a building already existing within fifty feet be hereafter burnt, pulled down, or destroyed by tempest, such building may be rebuilt; and that it shall not be lawful for any person to establish or newly carry on any such business, either in any building or vault, or in the open air, at a less distance than forty feet from any public way, or than fifty feet from any other such buildings of the first or dwelling-house class, and that if any such business be now carried on in any situation within such distances, then from the expiration of the period of thirty years next, after the passing of this Act, it shall cease to be lawful to continue to carry on such business in such situation, save as is hereinafter provided; and that if any person erect any building in the neighbourhood of any such business contrary to this Act, then, on conviction thereof before two justices, he shall forfeit a sum not exceeding fifty pounds, for every day during which such building shall remain near to such offensive or noxious business; or if any person establish anew any such business, or carry on any such business contrary to this Act, then, on conviction thereof before two justices, such person is hereby made liable to forfeit, for every day during which such business shall be carried on, a sum not exceeding fifty pounds, as the justices shall determine, and that it shall be lawful for the justices also to award to the prosecutor such costs as shall be deemed reasonable."

There are, however, provisions in the following clause of the Act for an appeal to justices at Special Sessions, for showing reasons to suspend any order for abolition, as well as to suspend orders for parties to adopt within reasonable time practicable means for preventing nuisances from arising in future from these businesses.

The 55th clause, which would abolish about four-fifths of the private slaughter places now in existence, has been looked for by most of the butchers for some years past, who have had warning of the change impending. And it is more than probable that their private interests would have been stimulated to provide for the new state of things by establishing well-regulated abattoirs in lieu of the old places, had not an attempt at unwise legislation last year tended to frustrate their inclinations to use public abattoirs.

The more intelligent citizens of several of the largest towns of the kingdom have seen fit to condemn the present system, after the most deliberate consideration, and have adopted the more modern system of killing and storing cattle in abattoirs, in preference to the old slovenly and obnoxious methods in vogue.

Hitherto annual licenses have been granted by magistrates under the Metropolitan Local Management Amendment Act,

but this can no longer be done without acting in direct contravention of the aforesaid building Act, nor will the attempt be made to do so, warning having been given in all the licences issued last October to this effect.

Under ordinary circumstances it was rather singular that Dr. Brewer should have advised the Metropolitan Board of Works (who, by-the-bye, if they had had an officer of health to advise, would not have been persuaded to endorse such a Bill in the last Session of Parliament, in spite of the opinions of nearly all the metropolitan and provincial medical officers of health who have experience, and given attention to the slaughter-house question) to undertake to bring in a Bill to repeal the clause of the Metropolitan Building Act, prohibiting the carrying on of offensive and noxious trades, and thus endeavour to perpetuate the evils of private slaughter-houses, which in my opinion, are practically irremediable by any kind of regulation and inspection by local officials.*

When the Bill was brought forward for second reading last Session, the House of Commons referred it to a Select Committee to inquire into the regulations of noxious trades, and the following recommendations were reported:—

1. Sec. 55 should be repealed; additional slaughter-houses be erected at Copenhagen Cattle Market.
2. Private slaughter-houses should be regulated by bye-laws.
3. That slaughter-houses should be made the means of detecting and preventing contagious disease of cattle.

With due deference to the members of the Select Committee, I must be allowed here to say, as one competent to speak on the subject, that the second recommendation is utterly impracticable. The Committee, as amateurs, visiting these places, were grossly deceived as to the facts and circumstances under their observation. They remarked almost one fact only, namely, that of cleanliness at the time of their visit. The officers of public health visiting these places at all hours, and seeing them when kept in the most perfect condition attainable by sanitary control and inspection, state most emphatically that they cannot be otherwise regarded than as nuisances at least, in all built up parts of town. In words used by medical officers of health, and in reports of inspectors

* Dr. Brewer's short Bill consists of the following clause:—"From and after the passing of this Act, the slaughtering of cattle or sheep by a butcher, in his slaughter-house, duly licensed, shall not be held to be carrying on an offensive or noxious business within the meaning of the said Act, 7 and 8 Vict. c. 84."

of nuisances, these places are described in strong language, as "atrocious nuisances," "abominable nuisances," "intolerable nuisances," and by myself as "virulent nuisances"—words that can be fully substantiated by anyone who frankly describes what he finds and sees in its true light. The following is a summary of defects found upon inspection of twenty-eight slaughter-houses visited by the Sanitary and Public Health Committee of Paddington in 1872, when previous notice had been given of their visit, and it might naturally be expected every effort was made to show the slaughter-houses as decent as possible, in order to have a renewal of the license.*

What are these defects and objections? They may be classed under three distinct heads.

1. *As to Site*.—Nearly all the private slaughtering places have no air space surrounding them; they are close to, instead of being detached and away from inhabited dwellings; they are mostly old premises converted into a makeshift place. Stables in a mews, a cart shed, coachhouse, washhouse, kitchen, back yards, or vaults may be seen; often the entrance is through a shop, or passage of the house, or down steps into an area below.

2. *As to the condition*.—In hot weather slaughter-house nuisances are the worst, when the polluted air attracts swarms of bluebottle flies, which infest larders of adjoining houses; rats come up from untrapped drains, seeking blood and offal; a saturated subsoil reeks from leaking of joints in the paving; traps of drains are left up, or taken up to wash down as much refuse as possible, including blood, which contaminates the sluggish current of a sewer for miles in its course; the loading or carrying of blood and manure for removal in badly constructed uncovered carts; then come tallow melters' carts to collect fat which, by being kept several days, stinks, and so makes the

* Twenty-four had defective paving, either in the floor of the slaughter-house, or the cattle-pens. Scarcely any were defective in lime whitening or washing down, because the visit of inspection was daily looked for. Thirteen had untrapped drains, the cover being left up, or thrown aside. Twenty were situated within twenty or thirty feet of inhabited dwellings. Fourteen were in mews, or used as stables, or in a court. Three were approached through a public shop. In fourteen the killing and removal of offal could be witnessed from adjoining or opposite houses. Five had living rooms above formerly but not now occupied. Eight were in very confined positions, most of them a covered yard or premises at the back. One had a blood-well composed of porous bricks in an offensive state—since abolished. One was found where pigs were kept in the cattle-pens. One had a dust-bin in the slaughter-house itself. One had the sheep-pen roof only three feet from the floor.

tallow melting offensive, which it need not be if done properly. I say little about the improper layerage of cattle standing in their dung, and the meat, how it must be damaged by being exposed to this organic effluvia and that of their respiration. Here also I must not forget the cruel and degrading practice of killing the animals in each others presence, which is revolting, and cannot be sanctioned. What also mean the extravasations of blood observed frequently on parts of the carcase, but the blows and violence used in getting them into their place, or tumbling them down area steps? Who does not object to the dangers of driving cattle through the crowded streets, their loud bellowing, and the heavy blows of the drovers, conducted mostly now at night to escape observation?

3. *As to construction.*—None of the private slaughter-houses have been erected with a view to efficiency. It is nonsense saying, as one witness talked about before the Noxious Trades Committee, that capital had been expended upon the erection of these places. They are, as before stated, old premises converted into makeshifts. The pens for the cattle are close, ill-ventilated, dark, without water supply; the drainage is generally good, but the opening into the main sewer too often untrapped. No proper catchpit, no covered receptacle for dung, or barrels for blood, fat, and offal; floors instead of being sloped, or of impermeable asphalt, or well paved, are generally leaky at the joints from the cement giving way to frequent slushing.

If I am permitted to enlarge upon the objectionable practice of private slaughtering in towns, the strongest reason I would urge against it, and in favour of a scheme of slaughter-house reform, is the absence of that guarantee or security for a proper quality of meat which the public ought to demand. The amount of meat sold in markets, and at third-rate shops, and made into sausages of a very inferior nutritive value, is something enormous, and that which is absolutely diseased and condemned is an almost fabulous quantity. This I might readily place before you in figures; the amount made known weekly in the press cannot be but a small part of what finds its way into the market. There is too much of lean meat generally used as food. Some cattle are mere scarecrows, to say nothing of being unhealthy when killed *to save their lives*, or prevent death, from starvation. Efficient inspection of the slaughter-houses would greatly improve the trade in the 3000 butchers' shops of the metropolis, and as I am ready to prove without detriment to the poor, as has been alleged so strongly

The evidence of the medical officer of health of Whitechapel ought to be regarded on this point.*

Close inquiry, by means of efficient methods of inspection, will discover that, at present, animals are killed when in a dying state, some having been exposed to overcrowding in railway trains, and get suffocated; others suffering from febrile changes from want of air, water, and food whilst in the cattle-trucks, or from bad layerage in *transitu*. The loss in this way is considerable, estimated by some butchers at eight shillings a day in the best bullocks. The damage to the meat from all these sources is well known to many butchers, who prefer country-killed meat for keeping longer and better than that from animals kept and killed in foul places, the flesh of which sooner commences a putrefractive change.

The remedy for all this points in the direction of efficient inspection by officers competent to judge of the quality of meat, and constantly occupied in this duty, which is expert work, and cannot be well entrusted to numerous local sanitary inspectors. For instance, in the northern districts there are 54 slaughter-houses in Kensington, 28 Paddington, 57 Marylebone, 90 St. Paneras, 110 Islington; and to inspect all these the cattle would have to be seen alive, what are daily going in, and all that goes out of the private slaughter-houses, night and day, at all hours—a matter of impossibility where the places are, as at present, isolated, and it must be remembered, are on private premises, where it would be too much to grant power of entry at all times. My own belief is that it is not possible in all cases to judge of the quality of the meat in the dead carcase; at any rate, it would be easier to judge from the living animal. These arguments in favour of special inspection apply with equal force to measures needful for detecting and preventing the spreading of cattle diseases—a matter of paramount importance not lost sight of by the Committee on Noxious Trades.

Should it be thought advisable to condemn the old system of killing cattle in private slaughter-houses, and should a re-

* “ Mr. Liddle is of opinion that if private slaughter-houses were abolished, and only licensed public slaughter-houses were used, competent officers appointed to inspect the animals before and after killing, and with power to condemn all meat that was unfit for human food, then it is probable that much of the bad meat, which now finds its way into some of the butcher's shops in London, would be prevented, and the sanitary officers of all local boards would be saved the trouble and responsibility of inspecting and condemning the bad meat exposed for sale.”—*Quarterly Report*, January, 1870.

commendation go forth from this Association in favour of establishing abattoirs in lieu thereof, the question worth consideration would then arise, in what manner and by what authority, the work could be best accomplished. The following is the resolution of the Medical Officers of Health Association, passed last year, and again re-affirmed during this month after a most dispassionate discussion, when the subject was again brought forward by Dr. T. Orme Dudfield, of Kensington :—

Moved and seconded—

“That, in the opinion of this meeting, the slaughtering of cattle in the private slaughter-houses of London should be abolished, and that a certain number of public slaughter-houses should be created, either under the supervision of the Corporation of London, or the Metropolitan Board of Works; and that those corporations should be urged to undertake the erection of such buildings, and also the management of them, forthwith.”

The following amendment was moved and seconded—

“That it is expedient that the 55th Section of the Metropolitan Buildings Act, 1844, be repealed, but that the number of slaughter-houses be gradually diminished by the abolition of many which are not in a thoroughly fit condition, and which have been in a measure tolerated on account of the uncertainty of the law; and that general, precise, stringent, and uniform regulations should be laid down to be adopted by the vestries; and that greater power be given to the local authority to take proceedings at any time of the year in cases where untrapped drains, want of care and cleanliness, cruelty, and general deficient arrangements for layerage are found to exist, penalties being recoverable in any police-court; and that no slaughter-house be licensed until the owner has signed a copy of bye-laws pledging himself to carry them out fully and faithfully.”

The amendment was supported only by the mover and seconder, and the original motion was carried.

The only two members supporting the amendment have districts more of a suburban character than the rest of London. My own opinion is in favour of the Metropolitan Board of Works in the metropolis taking the entire charge of supervising the trade in cattle-killing, and noxious trades connected therewith; and in country places, for the Council of the corporation of a borough town, and the Local authority, whether urban or rural, taking charge of all such places, granting licences or permits for killing cattle for sale, and for the carrying on of other noxious trades. The framing of such regulations or bye-laws as may be needful for their efficient management, is not difficult, while, at the same time, it will be proper to leave to private speculation an opportunity of carrying out the work, provided it was under inspection. In the former case a Bill would have to be introduced by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

For the latter amended clauses in the promised Public Health Bill, to be considered in Parliament, would readily meet the case without special legislation. What clauses should be introduced to regulate all noxious trades I need not here occupy your time to consider more in detail, than remark that they must be based upon the known facts and experience now before Parliament and the public, and must afford a better guarantee for the prevention and removal of nuisances than we now possess.

Another of the most objectionable features of private slaughtering of cattle not to be forgotten, and the cause of serious nuisances to a neighbourhood, arises from inefficient means for the disposal of blood and other kinds of offal, of which the quantity is very large.

Blood is not only a valuable commodity wasted. It is worse than wasted, inasmuch as it is washed down into drains and sewers, creating and keeping up dangerous nuisances at a distance along the whole line of sewerage. Even when it is saved in barrels or tubs, and carted away with the fat in uncovered carts, it is in such a decomposed state as to be unfit for passing through public thoroughfares. The absence of any proper means at hand for utilizing this substance for its albuminous properties, or for making artificial guano, brings about another evil, namely, the blood and offal from many private slaughtering places is often in a partially decomposed state given to pigs. This rough and disgusting kind of pig-feeding brings into the market a low class of bacon, tempting to poor people for its low price, although far from being cheap at any price. The butcher's offal-fed pig would soon disappear from the market if facilities were placed at the disposal of butchers to use the blood for its albumen value or for artificial manure. As soon as economical methods of storage and proper apparatus are provided in the neighbourhood, of a well-regulated public abattoir, a large number of noxious trades will cease to be public nuisances. The products of slaughter-houses can not only with facility be converted into artificial manure by methods free from smells, if properly carried out, but have a high commercial value, and a ready sale as agricultural fertilizers in every place where they have been tried.

Taking into consideration the blood and offal converted into artificial manure, the tallow and fat rendering-down, before it became putrid, and what are called the scraps, which can be sold for food for fowls and pigs, the butchers will find, upon due inquiry into the result attained in other large cities, that their own interests are not so much, if at all, endangered, as

many of them allege who are opponents to a change in the plan recommended for the metropolis.

Public health authorities ought not to be ignorant of the fact, that a good interest, as well as profits may be obtained for any capital expended upon works of this kind. There is scarcely any town of considerable size, where a slaughtering place, cattle-pens, a boiling-down shed, and a knacker's yard, are not needful receptacles for the deposit of offal and refuse, and their conversion into a saleable product, in the form of manure. It would be a profitable undertaking, either to the municipal authorities, or taken up by a private association. I say this from personal inquiry into the modes of dealing with the refuse of towns, and from reports in my possession, to which I have had occasion to refer.*

Having denounced in rather strong language what I conscientiously believe to be the eradicable evils of the present cattle-killing sheds, my paper would be incomplete if I were to omit to mention what are the essen-

* A report from a visit to the Slaughtering, Fat-Melting, and Refuse-Rendering establishment of New York, states :—"A hog-killing place, where 700 hogs had been killed the previous night, was found odourless, scrupulously clean, and not a trace of blood or offal seen. The blood is led by a simple contrivance to the cocks for removal ; it is all caught by a fertilizing company, without trouble to the slaughterers, and they pay for it over 2000 dollars a year. Every provision is made for the comfort of the animals, excellent ventilation, &c. The tanks of the melting vats for condemned animals burn up offensive gases, and give out no bad smells during the process. In a Jewish slaughter-house the proprietor told the inspectors that the blood was sold for 6000 dollars a year. At the Butchers, Hide, and Melting Company the cattle were in pens as fresh and sweet as a model farm-yard—food and water in abundance. Every member of the party seemed convinced that the profits made through the utilization of blood were well worth having. This new and valuable way of treating scraps and blood is, as far as we are able to learn, a great improvement upon any method heretofore used, either in this country or in Europe. By this new process, the success of which seems to be proved, a similar result is reached without offensive odour, and a fertilizing produce worth forty to fifty dollars a ton, from 'tankings,' and also from blood, without the addition of chemicals, in the space of one or two hours. This method will be used at the Brighton (Mass.) abattoirs, and by means of it the blood and offal of all the animals slaughtered each day will, in the course of the same day, be reduced to the form of a simple and inodorous powder. If it can be shown at Brighton (Mass.), as we believe it will soon be done, that foul odours, which have been thought to be inseparable from slaughtering, bone-boiling, and fat-melting, are avoidable, and that, in the final treatment of refuse animal matter, the ammoniacal products of decomposition, instead of being wasted to pollute the air, may be saved to enrich the earth, it will be a sanitary and economical demonstration, whose good effects will not be limited to the State of Massachusetts."

tial features of an establishment to cope with them, and capable of reducing to a minimum all nuisances that at present beset, and will in future embarrass, the sanitary authorities of cities that neglect to legislate for civic purification. I am satisfied that all noxious trades must sooner or later be regulated under stringent municipal bye-laws, and that they cannot be left entirely to private speculation.

The site most convenient for the establishing of public abattoirs should be an open space or field, not farther distant in the suburbs of a town or city than a short drive or walk; it should be suitable for one or more blocks of building; it should be near a railway, water communication, or the cattle market, and the following buildings should be contiguous, but distinct from each other:—

1. Slaughter-house for bullocks, sheep, and pigs, with good water supply at high pressure; open ventilation, good drainage, asphalted floor, with convenience for the removal of blood, hides, offal, and carcasses of animals.

2. A set of cattle pens, or layerage, with store for fodder, water trough, facility for cleansing, and the removal of manure, &c.

3. An engine and boiler house, with tall chimuey for carrying off gases, according to the necessity of trade—with sufficient steam power for the tallow-melting tanks, greaseworks, bone-boiling, glue-making, &c.; hot water for washing and cleansing.

4. A store-house for hides, for bones, wool, hair, &c.; and the blood and offal, and all offensive materials, to be kept in covered tanks. The making of animal charcoal may be desirable, and other processes which I need not mention here.

5. In part of the same premises, or an adjoining field, should be a tanpit, the knacker's yard, with suitable appliances.

6. Dwellings for men and stabling for horses may have to be provided for those who have to be employed on the premises, or for carrying out the work.

The main points I endeavour to prove are these:—

1. The impracticability of attempting to reconstruct the old private slaughter-houses in built up parts of towns.

2. The impossibility of securing, in the present private slaughter-houses, sufficient air space, means of cleansing, and drainage to prevent them from becoming nuisances injurious to the health of people living in their vicinity—nuisances arising from the pollution of the air, drains, and subsoil.

3. The remedy I propose is the crection of abattoirs in convenient suburban localities, or where the objectionable practice of driving cattle in streets and thoroughfares of towns can be avoided; where cattle can be kept sweet and clean in well-kept

pens, duly provided with pure water, fresh air, shade in hot and shelter in cold weather; where they are less exposed to violence and brutality of drovers; and where the transport of blood, offal, hides, and tallow can be effected, without nuisance or complaint of neighbours, to places where they can either be sold, or preserved by methods free from objection, or utilized at once for the owners thereof.

4. And lastly, this is the most important recommendation, where, as I maintain, there is no difficulty in carrying out, viz., in the inspection, by competent judges, of the cattle before they are killed, or of the meat supplied, either in carcase or otherwise, to the public markets, or to retail dealers.

In conclusion, permit me to remark, that it will neither be creditable to Parliament, nor to the local governing bodies of the metropolis and large towns, to endure the present state of things a day longer than is necessary. The Act, as I have said, will shortly come into operation, and a great achievement will be performed by simply remaining quiet and doing nothing at all. Should any efforts be made by persons interested in the prolongation of the Act, it will then, I urge, become the duty of this Association to make some representation to Government with a view of effectually putting a stop to a system so offensive, so injurious, and so repugnant to the feelings of all right-minded persons.

Among those present at the discussion were the following:—Mr. R. T. Arnold, Dr. Bateson, Mr. J. J. Brown, Mr. Sneade Brown, Mr. R. Calvert, Dr. Carpenter, Mr. W. J. Cooper, Dr. Thomas Dudfield, Professor Gamgee, Mr. C. V. Game, Mr. P. C. Greatorex, Mr. C. J. Grece, Dr. Hardwicke, Mr. E. L. Jacob, Mr. D. Jarvis, Mr. H. N. Mozley, Mr. C. A. Ratcliffe, Dr. George Ross, Dr. Sarvis, Mr. G. W. Shaw, Mr. Joseph Smout, Mr. J. Smout, jun., Mr. Thomas Webber.

Dr. SARVIS (Medical Officer of Health for Bethnal Green), said he should give his vote against the total abolition of private slaughter-houses. In summer he thought it was an advantage to have them near where the meat was to be sold, for nothing was so injurious to the meat as its transit. We might keep the best of the slaughter-houses.

Professor GAMGEE was much astonished to hear a medical officer of health advocate the continuance for one day of a single private slaughter-house in any city of the world. It was also astonishing to him to find how hard it was for the public interest to be protected in opposition to that of a trade, which always would have advocates looking out for, and seeking in every possible way, to add to its

pecuniary advantages, and counting as nothing the sanitary well-being of the public at large. He was stating a fact, when he said that private slaughter-houses rendered it impossible to inspect animals, and prevent the sale of diseased meat. He was sorry to have to acknowledge the fact that even the government virtually sanctioned the trade in diseased animals, which was attended with such bad consequences. The private slaughter-houses offered facilities for keeping up this trade of supplying meat which was often poisonous. It was wrong to bring forward medical men to give evidence in regard to diseased meat. There was but one safe rule, and that was the one which had been given by the great law-giver, Moses, namely, that such meat should not be eaten. If we had had a law to suppress the trade in this kind of meat, we should probably have meat twenty-five or thirty per cent. cheaper than it is now. Any rational method to put a stop to disease would, if successful, add largely to the food of the country, but it was very difficult to impress this fact on the public mind. The ignorance in the minds of those who were able to introduce a better state of things was, he thought, disgraceful, and it was intolerable that there should be no system of watchfulness, the want of which condemned our people, in many instances, virtually to starvation. Simple precautions, such as were mentioned in the paper, would obviate these evils. He would develop, as much as possible, the free-trade in meat, but stop that in disease, but its abolition was impossible so long as the private slaughter-houses existed. He had come to the conclusion, from what he had seen of the use made of diseased meat in sausages, and by the third-rate butchers, that it was with them impossible to have any system adequate to protect the public.

Mr. SNEADE BROWN called attention to the evidence which had been given in a former number of the "Transactions" of the Society, in regard to Leith and other towns where private slaughter-houses were not allowed, and in which it was shown that there had been an advantage to everyone. In a Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council in 1865, where the slaughter-houses had been examined, in the course of an inquiry instituted for the purpose of devising measures for the prevention of a disease which had appeared on the continent, there were some terrible pictures of the condition of slaughter-houses. All of them were found to have objectionable features.

Dr. ALFRED CARPENTER said the question ought to be taken up in reference to every large town in the kingdom. In the district with which he was connected new slaughter-houses had been forbidden and public abattoirs erected. But he was sorry to say they had not been much used, the butchers preferred to continue using their private places; perhaps because they could slaughter their diseased cattle without being observed. The adoption of the public abattoirs would be an advantage for the poor. In the private slaughter-houses even good meat became tainted by contact with the

bad conditions which prevailed. As for the objection taken against their abolition, on the ground of the difficulty of transit in hot weather, he (Dr. Carpenter) thought there would be no harm done if at such a time meat were not eaten at all. Much of the disease that prevailed then was produced by eating animal food in a state of change, and people would be much better without it. The law required to be altered to meet the requirements of the case in many ways. He hoped this Society would make a strong effort against the continuance of such places. The evidence of the Parliamentary Committee which sat upon the subject was entirely one-sided—no one was heard adverse to them.

Dr. GEORGE ROSS (Medical Officer of Health for St. Giles') supported the views contained in the paper. Nothing was more abominable than the condition of the slaughter-houses, and there could be no doubt that if they were abolished it would be a great boon to the public. He was opposed to any compromise, because he could see no way to improvement short of entire abolition. There was a much greater difficulty in dealing with the subject in this metropolis than in small towns. There would be a great difficulty in providing for four abattoirs for the metropolis as proposed, and in his opinion it would be better that Copenhagen Market should be supplied with accommodation adequate to the wants of the whole metropolis. Under proper regulations for the prevention of nuisances, if this were the case, there would be no more than there are now connected with the live cattle.

Mr. CHARLES V. GAME looked upon the paper as entirely theoretical, and denied that private slaughter-houses were necessarily injurious, he having lived for twenty years, and brought up a family, over one, and they were as healthy a family as any in London. The present slaughter-houses ought to be kept in a cleanly and creditable manner.

Mr. R. C. GREATORIX said that immense supervision was necessary, and that was one reason why private slaughter-houses should be abolished. Their position was bad, and all sanitary science agreed that they were injurious to the health of the people. On economical and other grounds he advocated the abolition of the private slaughter-houses.

The CHAIRMAN said he had taken much interest in the subject, and a year ago had felt it his duty to take such parliamentary action as led to the defeat of Dr. Brewer's bill. Something more precise in the definition, and more stringent in the remedies, was required to meet the condition of the slaughter-houses in our large towns. The matter, as it concerned them, should not be left till found to be a nuisance, but taken as being, in a degree, a nuisance *per se*. And the only question was whether these places should be under strict regulations in the heart of towns, or entirely forbidden. He had taken note of the evidence offered before the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1873, on this subject, and of the

character of the witnesses, and had found that many frivolous and irrelevant questions were asked. A great experiment had been carried on at Edinburgh, which had resulted in a great saving financially, and an improvement in the public health, yet no one from that city was examined as to these matters. A great discussion had likewise been carried on at Liverpool on the subject, and definite results arrived at there ; but no gentleman from that town was consulted. Most of the witnesses examined were interested persons carrying on the very trades, the nature and effect of which were under discussion. A medical man or two was among them, and examined ; but he (the Chairman) feared their evidence was not respected. It was a misfortune that this inquiry should have led to so disappointing an issue. He was quite convinced, in his own mind, that we should have in our great cities slaughter-houses under the control of the public authority. He felt doubt, however, whether they should be open to any one to slaughter in them when he chose. He would have them let to individuals. If they were placed entirely and exclusively in the hands of the public authority, that authority would go to sleep, but if let to individuals under suitable conditions, it would take care that the tenants observed these conditions. If we were to have private places we must have a license on the one hand, and bye-laws on the other. The license must be granted by the authority which supervised, with rigid conditions and rigid bye-laws regulating the manner in which the business should be conducted. In this matter it was our duty to stimulate public opinion, and watch its operation. It was impossible to enforce such things greatly in advance of public sentiments, and before we could have what we desired in a really efficient manner, we must have a strong municipal authority—an authority possessing the public confidence. To the spread of scientific education he looked for good results, and he was convinced that one of the results of the public education of the country would eventually be far more effective than laws relating to the public health.

Dr. CARPENTER moved—

“ That the subject be referred to the Standing Committee of the Health Department, in order that the Council may be recommended to take action in the matter if necessary.”

Dr. T. O. DUDFIELD seconded the motion, and in doing so, called attention to the fact that a great many private slaughter-houses had been tolerated by the medical inspectors, which would never have been allowed to continue had it not been known that they were, as a whole, in consequence of the law, non-permanent.

Mr. SNEADE BROWN proposed, and Dr. CARPENTER seconded, a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried unanimously.